

REMARKS

Claims 1-14 are pending in this application. Claims 15-20 are canceled herein. Claims 1, 3, 5, 9 and 14 are amended herein. No new matter has been added. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the claims in view of the following remarks.

Claims 1-8 and 14-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. In particular, the Office Action noted that the substrate is not held contactlessly since it is held by the holding tool 260 as illustrated in Figures 2 and 9.

In response, claims 1, 5 and 15 have been amended to clearly recite that a surface of the substrate is held contactlessly. This recitation is consistent with the specification. For example, Paragraph [0043] clearly states that "[the] center port 100 and the rotating housing portion 200 form a wafer holding plane 300 and contactlessly hold a semiconductor wafer W above the wafer holding plane 300 by using the Bernoulli Effect." It is therefore respectfully submitted that the claims comply with the enablement requirement.

Claims 1, 3-8 and 14-15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Hashimoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,261,378) herein referred to as Hashimoto. In addition, claim 2 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hashimoto as applied to claim 1 above. Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

Claim 1, as amended, specifically recites that "fluid that is provided from said at least one fluid-providing path is flown from a gap between said surface of said fluid-providing apparatus and said main surface of said first rotating member." As noted by the Office Action, Hashimoto discloses the spin chuck portion 35 that is rotatably held by the pillar portion 36 through bearings. However, Hashimoto fails to teach or suggest that fluid that is provided from at least one fluid-providing path is flown from a gap between said surface and said main surface as

required by the claims. As clearly shown in Figure 3, Hashimoto only discloses the nozzle 50, 51, 52 that are formed on the pillar portion 36.

Claims 2-4 depend from claim 1 and add further limitations. It is respectfully submitted that these dependent claims are allowable by reason of depending from an allowable claim as well as for adding new limitations.

Claim 5, as amended, specifically recites that "fluid that is provided from the selected fluid-providing path is flown from a gap between said surface of said fluid-providing means and said main surface of said first rotating member." Applicant respectfully submits that this claim is allowable over the references of record.

Claims 6-8 depend from claim 5 and add further limitations. It is respectfully submitted that these dependent claims are allowable by reason of depending from an allowable claim as well as for adding new limitations.

Claim 14, as amended, specifically recites "a holding plane comprising a surface, on which a plurality of blow-off outlets is formed and which is arranged stationary and an annular main surface that rotates about said surface, a gap formed between said surface and said main surface, said holding plane opposite to one surface of a substrate, and a fluid-providing apparatus to provide fluid to said plurality of blow-off outlets, wherein, by contactlessly holding a surface of the substrate above said holding plane by fluid that is blown off from at least one blow-off outlet of said plurality of blow-off outlets, and wherein gas is flown from the gap by providing gas, and by blowing off cleaning chemical solutions from at least one blow-off outlet of said plurality of blow-off outlets, one surface of the substrate that is held substantially contactlessly is cleaned." Applicant respectfully submits that this claim is allowable over the references of record.

Claims 9-12 have rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sumnitsch (U.S. Patent No. 5,513,668). In addition, claim 13 has rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sumnitsch as applied to claim 9 above. Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

Claim 9, as amended, specifically recites "a fluid-providing apparatus having a first and a second diameters, wherein a plurality of blow-off outlets are formed on a surface of said first diameter and a first labyrinth seal portion is formed on a surface of said second diameter, said first labyrinth seal having a plurality of annular convex or concave portions." The claim also requires a rotating member that "further comprises a second labyrinth seal portion having a plurality of annular convex or concave portions that fits the first labyrinth seal portion." Sumnitsch, on the other hand, fails to teach or suggest a labyrinth seal structure which has a plurality of annular convex or concave portions. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claim 9 is allowable over the references of record.

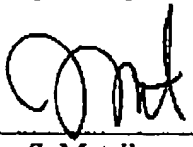
Claims 10-13 depend from claim 9 and add further limitations. It is respectfully submitted that these dependent claims are allowable by reason of depending from an allowable claim as well as for adding new limitations.

Applicants have made a diligent effort to place the claims in condition for allowance. However, should there remain unresolved issues that require adverse action, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner telephone Ira S. Matsil, Applicants' attorney, at 972-732-1001 so that such issues may be resolved as expeditiously as possible. No fee is believed due in

connection with this filing. However, should one be deemed due, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1065.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date


Ira S. Matsil
Attorney for Applicants
Reg. No. 35,272

Slater & Matsil, L.L.P.
17950 Preston Rd., Suite 1000
Dallas, Texas 75252-5793
Tel. 972-732-1001
Fax: 972-732-9218